



# NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

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## DECEMBER MINUTES

DECEMBER 16, 2024

Approved on 2/24/2025

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, December 16, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

Upon Roll Call, those present and absent were as follows:

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Carney; Vice-Chairperson Richards; Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Brooks & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Jones.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Sharon Kimble; Attorney Tom O'Connor; Stephen Dupont; Danielle McColgan; Jose Cruz; Angel Sadlowski; Elizabeth Sanchez; Wanda Rivera; Jerry Halberstadt & Councilor LaBarge.

### LTO COMMENT

**Doug Kierdorf** – Forsander LTO President. We had an election on 12/3/24 overseen and conducted by Mass Union of Public Housing tenants. Mr. Kierdorf introduced Andrea Gallano, secretary, Kathleen St. John, Vice President. Ron Terren is the treasurer, who did not attend. We look forward to working with the Housing Authority and the Executive Director as well as the Board to improve conditions here at Forsander and around Northampton. A copy of next year’s budget will be forwarded to the Board and the Executive Director before the end of the year.

**Kathleen St. John** – I have been living here about 12 years and the biggest issue here has been the ventilation and the smoking policy. The ventilation system, as some of you may know, is pretty antiquated, it is as old as the building, about 65 years. You can no longer get parts for them. Since I have been here, it has been on the 5-year plan but it gets pushed up. Some of the buildings the ventilation has stopped altogether, in my building we haven’t had any for almost 5 years and when on you can hear it vibrating through the walls, floors and outside. It also affects the smoking policy where there is no separation of separate buildings for smokers and non- smokers and that makes it difficult for everybody. This is our #1 priority that we want to address and negotiate with the Housing Authority. There are a few other issues but we want to work cooperatively and be a voice for change that would benefit everybody.

**Doug Kierdorf** – I have brought this up several times at board meetings and I will point out the NHA is now in violation of the Mass. sanitary code, so this has to be addressed.

**Kathleen St. John** – it cannot be jerry rigged because it means that it just makes it really loud and the noise is worse than the lack of ventilation, the vibration of the whole building, it is bad for people’s health, it is bad for the health of the building. We have had chunks start falling out of the ceiling in the hallway, it vibrates through the whole building and through our bodies at times. It is just unbearable to live with and I doubt than anybody in the Housing Authority or any of you would tolerate living with that, so this needs to be addressed immediately.

**Chairperson Carney** – thank you very much. Mr. Kierdorf as you said, we have talked about this but we can’t do a back and forth but I really appreciate that you have all come and once again reminded us. I

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know the Director will want to immediately meet with you, now that you have your officers set up. I know it is on the top of the list for your issues that have come up and giving you notice and keeping you updated on the progress as we move forward with that project.

**Kathleen St. John** – and a willingness to negotiate with us.

**Chairperson Carney** – we are really happy that the LTO's have been established for this very purpose, to be able to bring people together with management. I thank you so much for stepping up and taking charge by being the officers and that this will move more easily forward, I am sure. So we really appreciate that.

**SALVO LTO – Al Chagnon, President** – I am here with David Edward, Vice President, Chris Gagne, Treasurer and one resident. I want to talk about security, it is out of control here at Salvo. Between August and November last year we had 3 people trespass. Between February and April, we had 7 people trespass. There is so much drug activity in the building. My board members and I have been looking up ways to resolve this issue. We came across Mass. General Law 121B section 7 where it says the Housing Authority can use 37 police officers and would only have to pay back 1/3 of the cost. Maybe that is something we need to look into. We need police in this building to clean up the mess that is bringing in the traffic. We have patients from Dr. Bossies' office coming in from other parts of Northampton just to come here to visit other people of Dr. Bossies' office that are doing this stuff. Every other day we are kicking someone out of the stairwells who are smoking, it is out of control. After April we haven't trespassed anybody, there are people here that need to be trespassed, but it is not getting done, people feel neglected here and if we don't resolve the issue it may have to go to legal action, neglect of seniors. We have health issues here but it isn't as bad as the security, it is overwhelming. We are senior people here on our last hurrah and we would love to live in peace and get some comfort to know we are safe. I get a lot of slack from 192 units that they aren't safe and they want something done. I hope this can get resolved very soon.

**David Edwards, Vice President** – I reiterate what Al was saying. This is a senior living facility, this is the last stop for a lot of these people and hopefully not the next stop for some of you. We need to look at what we can do immediately to provide them with safety, security and quality of life. These problems have been persistent since I have been here for 2 years and it is not like we don't know where they live. We have a board of intelligent people that we would appreciate who would start to work on remedying the issues that have been so persistent in this building.

**SALVO TENANT** - I am having a problem with my land line phone. Mr. Chagnon advised him to talk to the property manager.

**David Edwards, Vice President** – we are removing at least 8 people a week from the stairwells and we are calling the police at least 15 times a week and we have been doing this now for a year. Something has to be done to rectify the situation.

**Chairperson Carney** – thank you all, we can't do a back and forth and Mr. Chagnon told you to see Jose about the phone issue. Mr. Kierdorf and Mr. Chagnon should have received an email today too, because I just received it from the State. I am so glad we have the two organizations now and hope we move forward because it is this type of organized activity that will really help us get the information and help work together to identify the issues and get this done. We hear health and safety is a primary concern at Salvo, I am hearing that very loud and clear and also the health and safety of folks at Forsander. Please keep coming, you won't see the Executive Director here tonight but will be seeing this and hearing very soon about the new guidelines for the LTO's and meeting with you right away.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

**Ward I Resident** – I live in Ward 1A, am a former public housing resident of family housing. Congratulations to Forsander on their success with their nomination and voting, it is very exciting. I hope to see it in every complex in Northampton. Congratulations.

**MCDONALD RESIDENT** – I have questions from the last meeting. I am curious to know of the human rights/civil rights training of your managers. I got a letter saying that it has come to the management's attention that my dog was going somewhere and it wasn't cleaned up. Don't say it is a lease violation, just tell me how we can fix it. Please! Congratulations to Forsander, we are a federal property as well and I am hoping we can get our LTO together. Was there any mention of the ED rescheduling our normal meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday? I am a little confused, I think we all need to get on the same page, it is really important if we want to be effective. Also, another way is having an objective secretary because I look at the notes and I say wow, who wrote these? It is something to consider, do what you want because you're going to do it anyways, that is what people always say to me. My question remains – let's say someone has a military background or they have grown up in terrible dire poverty and they like to use scents or they like hospital corners on their beds. You don't know my background, maybe my cleanliness is different than yours and maybe I don't care about my floor because I am walking on it and it is asbestos, who wants to scrub asbestos? Just take us into consideration a little bit. Another person said you won't meet beautiful people up here it is a tough place. I met Grow Food and thank God for Grow Food look at all we have done. It is almost Christmas; do you really want to come spray for ants before Christmas? Let's take a break and enjoy our families if we have them or for some of us enjoy our Manna meals, at least get on the list.

**SALVO RESIDENT** – I want to talk about a tribute of a resident who is no longer with us. Not only was he a resident, he was an irritant of course, but he was a friend. There was a celebration of life at Salvo and I want to thank Commissioner Jones for attending and speaking, it was really heartfelt. I want to thank Northampton Neighbors inclusion committee for helping with their gifts and food items. That was a little bit impromptu because there was scheduled on that day a Friendsgiving and then when he passed away I said we have to utilize that. It has been an emotional wreck for me. On Wednesday I said I should cancel it because I don't think I can give him justice. I wanted to have video and his voice instead of mine, that did not happen but I am hoping next spring we can do something like that. So I am asking people here if you want to do a video and give me some funny moments or something like that and email it to me that would be helpful. I think the last speaker talking about holidays and people being human and this is the last place, that has affected me. I think he wanted a spirit of cooperation, he really did even though he was away at several hospitals, he was always like – what is going on, tell so and so to call me, why haven't they called? He was a real character. I hope in the spirit of my beloved friend that next year this Board will do pretty much what other tenants are saying, let us work together as a unit and let us work together for the betterment of all of our tenants. We are a community, we are neighbors, we may not like each other, but in my heart I love everyone, I certainly don't like a few and half the time I didn't like the person who is gone, but I loved him and I will just leave it at that for now. Thank you.

**CITY COUNCILOR LABARGE** - I was asked to attend this meeting and I am very glad I did. I am really hearing about safety and I have great concerns about that and I think the Housing Authority Commission is going in the right direction on what they want to do – is to work with both associations here and I have talked to Maureen about the State in general and she was going to be writing them a letter. I think they should attend a meeting, apparently it is very difficult to get somebody to come there. I know Maureen very well and I think she will do anything in her power to try to make that happen. My great concern is of the safety issues that I heard tonight. I feel that no matter who you are, what your age is, no matter, nobody should feel fear at all and that bothers me. I know the Housing Director is on vacation now and I am going to talk with her directly and I know the Housing Commission will be

talking with her also because something needs to be done here, there is no question about it. I don't think anybody in Walter Salvo, McDonald, Forsander, also nobody should have to live under fear. If there are problems here of people accessing into buildings, I have a problem with that. A problem with what might be occurring there with drugs, right down the line. It sounds like a very serious problem to me and I think probably what should be done here is inviting also our Chief of Police to one of these meetings, so he can hear the associations and their concerns of being frightful, because I don't want that to happen, period. So thank you for the invite, I got to be here this evening. I am very fortunate because usually our meeting starts at 5:00 and we don't get over until after 6:00 or 6:30 but tonight we started at 4:30 and it ended just a little after 5. Thank you all.

**Chairperson Carney** – thank you Councilor LaBarge I know people here are happy to see you, we don't often get a visit from a City Councilor, so thank you for coming and showing some interest and I think folks who would like to reach out to Councilor LaBarge, she would probably be happy to hear from you as well.

You do see we have the two recognized LTO's here, this has been a primary concern for this Board is to move forward, we all want to see continued development of LTO's. For this very reason just so there can be a spirit of cooperation that is fostered and we can really attend to the specific situations that are going on for residents. I was really glad for those people who follow this and I think it is the other commissioners here and Gwen Nabad too, today there was just issued a new PHN specifically on LTO's and working together with LHA. I will encourage you to look it up, go to the State's EOHLC and put in the word PHN it should bring up all the new ones and you will be very interested to read that one that just came out today.

**Jerry Halberstadt** – Madam Chair, I am very personally heartened to hear the talk of cooperation and involvement of tenants in a systematic way to address the needs. Wonderful that you had a councilor come and take an interest in the citizens of Northampton who happen to live in housing. I often just show up here and just listen. I just want to wish everyone a happy holiday and good luck with the challenges you have discussed tonight. Thank you.

**Vice-Chairperson Richards** – I am also so heartened to see the Tenant Association here, we have been hopeful in trying to get the tenants association active and it seems like they are now and I am just so appreciative that they are here tonight and working together.

#### APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 2024 REGULAR MINUTES WITH AMENDMENT

**Vice-Chairperson Richards** put forth the motion to approve, seconded by **Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield**.

**VOTING YAY:** Chairperson Carney; Vice-Chairperson Richards; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Cancel & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

**VOTING NAY:** NONE

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Jones

Therefore, **Chairperson Carney** approved the November 2024 minutes.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** - in the minutes under the Executive Director's report it states that I said the October DCC meeting, I was mentioning the October NHA meeting., can that be corrected? Also, can you number the transcript pages?

**Chairperson Carney** – sometimes they are 400 pages, I will talk to you about that offline.

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

Sharon read the report with updates.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – I didn't hear anything about what was expressed about the resident's mental health issues and addictions and asking for an independent investigation on some of the

things they brought up which are some very serious issues. Secondly I would like to receive the ED report, I have been asking for years and I thought I would maybe get it in October and November. Please accompany that, I hear it but I would like to see it as well. I thought we would be talking about an independent investigator so we can investigate some of the serious allegations that have been alleged.

Chairperson Carney spoke about the Manna Kitchen for food delivery for Christmas.

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### MOTION

##### TO APPROVE RESOLUTION #2024-09 ADOPTION OF THE UTILITY ALLOWANCE SCHEDULE EFFECTIVE 01/01/2025 FOR ALL SECTION 8 PROGRAMS AND FEDERAL FAMILY

Vice-Chairperson Richards put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Brooks.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice-Chairperson Richards; Commissioner Brooks & Commissioner Cancel.

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

ABSENT: Commissioner Jones.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Vice-Chairperson Richards – I am happy to support any help we can get and that sounds like a very positive thing even if it is on an annual basis for us to move forward.

##### MOTION

##### TO APPROVE RESOLUTION #2024-10 SECTION 8 PAYMENT STANDARDS 2025.

Vice-Chairperson Richards put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Brooks.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice-Chairperson Richards; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield & Commissioner Cancel.

VOTING NAY: NONE.

ABSENT: Commissioner Jones.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Vice-Chairperson Richards – happy to support this resolution and I have heard from many people that there is a very long waiting list for Section 8 and it will be giving landlords a little bit more money.

Speaking as a former Section 8 landlord of many years ago, it is just helpful to partner with the Housing Authority on the Section 8's.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I have a question for Sharon – why is it the change in payment for example, the two bedroom for the year 2025, it is a negative 5, that would be pretty exceptional don't you think? Or is something going on that I don't understand quite well enough. There is a negative 13, so it is down \$13.00 for a one bedroom in 2025.

Sharon Kimble – I show a 2-bedroom fair market value in 2024 was \$1,375.00 and now it is \$1,496.00 that we can give a landlord.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – What is the yellow section indicating here?

Angel Sadlowski – The payment standard shows the fair market rent from 2024 and next line the fair market rent for 2025. NHA had a waiver for the payment standards of 120%. Currently we do not have a waiver so we had to base the payments standards off of the 110% which is the maximum HUD allows a Housing Authority to rate the payment standard at. Therefore, a couple of the bedroom sizes decreased

by 3 or 5 but that was based on the decrease of 120% to 110% due to the waiver not being approved at this time.

**Chairperson Carney** – do we know what was the problem with the waiver this year? Was it unique that we weren't getting it or is it something statewide?

**Angel Sadlowski** – we are currently in the process of collecting data to get it to HUD for approval which takes time and we did not make the deadline due to multiple reasons. We are currently working on that and then we will re-approach the Board.

**Sharon Kimble** – 120% doesn't always get approved and we were fortunate to get it last year and the rents were so off.

**Chairperson Carney** – people will understand; we will try to get that waiver. Northampton does have exceedingly high rents, a lot of explaining to do.

**Sharon Kimble** – the norm is 110%, that is the standard.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – if it becomes 120% will you come back and retroactively reflect that in the payment standard or will you have to wait until next year?

**Angel Sadlowski** – so what that means, Joella is anybody who is currently under the 120% waiver is kind of grandfathered in for the next year, so they will stay honored at that 120% payment standard. If they choose to move within this one-year time frame, then they would go back down to 110%. If they are a new admission into the program it is 110%. Anyone who is already leased up and currently in place for the next 12 months will be honored at that 120%.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – I just want to thank you I really totally understood this completely. I wish I could have more information on that because I am very curious about it. Thank you for taking the time to explain this to me and thank you Chair for allowing it.

**Vice-Chairperson Richards** – I am happy that people who are now in 120% will continue that until there is a change in residence. This is something we have little control over. The rates are set by the State according to market. We are at 110% and I am grateful for that and I keep my fingers crossed they will approve 120% again.

**Chairperson Carney** – Commissioner Cancel has been with the Board for a number of years and unfortunately we are losing him as a member of the Board due to his very busy life and schedule. I want to offer him our deep appreciation from the Board for all of the service, not only as a Board member but what Commissioner Cancel has brought to us is a wealth of experience having grown up and lived in Northampton's public housing at Florence Heights and then many years as a Hampshire Heights resident. I do want to say thank you for your service.

**Vice-Chairperson Richards** – I want to thank Commissioner Cancel, it has been a long road but two things I want to say about Commissioner Cancel - we really build good Lego houses and I think that is a sign of things to come for Commissioner Cancel. I want to wish him the best of luck in everything he does, it has really been a pleasure. Thank you for your service, Commissioner Cancel.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – First of all I would like to say I have learned so much from you Edgar. I once referred to you that you reminded me of Nelson Mandela. All the stuff that he was going through, calm and poised and it was an inspiration to me. With that being said I know you have a family and you have other obligations that you are involved in with the community, but I have to tell you on a very selfish note, I have separation anxiety and abandonment issues, don't go – stay at least another month or two – please!

**Commissioner Cancel** – thank you so much. I am really, really proud of the Housing Authority and where we have come from and where we are headed as an organization. I am really thankful and grateful to working with you for 5 years now. Right now it is hard for me to make the meetings but I am hoping that the tenant's associations and tenants themselves will see me a lot more in the community and

whatever I can do to help them. I am really glad that things are going better for the Board and I am really excited for the opportunity of someone else to serve. It is also my last month at the Housing Partnership. I will be around and I am grateful for the opportunity to have served here and to meet all of you. Thank you so much.

**Chairperson Carney** – I was so glad to hear you say this was not goodbye and that we are still going to see you because we do need you here and your experience at least coming and giving us public comment and letting us know you still care.

**City Councilor LaBarge** – I want to thank you for everything, I am his City Councilor and he has been wonderful to work with. I met his wife and he wasn't there and now he is working at Valley Bike with Marc Patillo and you couldn't ask for a better person, who is also a resident of mine with his Mom and he just lost his Dad this year too. You are going to do great and I want to thank you and your family for being part of Ward 6, believe me you are wonderful.

**Chairperson Carney** – I want to thank everyone for coming here in December. We hope to see you all again next month. I urge you to take a look at that most recent PHN, I think you will be pleased and I hope everyone has a great holiday.

**Commissioner Cancel** put forth the motion to adjourn the December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting at 6:31 p.m. seconded by Vice-Chairperson Richards. All were in favor.